



# Focus on "Friends"

## *Southeast Region Friends Group News*

### Note from the Regional Director

Spring is the season of new beginnings, when nature awakes from the long winter and surprises us once again with her beauty. No matter what else may be going on around us, spring has a way of lifting us up. Of reminding us that where there is life, there is hope.

We got a taste of that hope just a few weeks ago at the 77th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference held here in Atlanta. There really isn't another meeting quite like it. Sponsored by the Wildlife Management Institute, the "North American," as it is commonly known, brings together professionals and partners from across the wildlife conservation community to network, to share ideas and research, to inspire one another, and to capitalize on opportunities to improve the professional management of the continent's fish and wildlife resources.

The turnout for this annual meeting cuts across the spectrum of the world of fish and wildlife stakeholders. State and Tribal fish and wildlife agencies; the Department of Defense; Federal land management agencies (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); national, regional and state Flyway councils; the Partners in Flight Program; Ducks Unlimited, the National Rifle Association; the Wildlife Society; the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, species recovery task forces, the Boone and Crockett Club; the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; the Wild Turkey Federation; representatives of the tourism industry; environmental educators—anyone with an interest in environmental stewardship, from government, business, industry, NGOs, and academia, is likely to be at the North American.

The meeting was the perfect way to kick off spring. For starters, to be in the presence of so many people who care

about the future of our fish and wildlife resources is a great encouragement. At the North American, we are reminded that we are not in this alone. There are people who are doing good things for the resource in every corner of the nation. And together we are looking at overarching challenges to sustainable wildlife, including climate change and energy development, important topics on this year's agenda.

The North American also reminds us that the changes we are undertaking to organize ourselves for maximum success in the 21st century is a topic of concern to our many partners as well. At the meeting, we heard from State fish and game departments on their own process of transformation to meet the needs and challenges of today and the future.

The meeting was also an occasion for a major community celebration—the 75th anniversary of the nation's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) program. Over the past three-quarters of a century, WSFR has contributed more than \$12 billion to fish and wildlife conservation in the United States, more than any other single conservation effort. The Wildlife Restoration program was created on September 2, 1937, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, which raises funds through a dedicated excise tax on sporting guns and ammunition. In 1950, the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act was enacted and added to the WSFR program. Through this law, funds are provided for fish conservation and boating, and fishing recreational programs in each State through an excise tax placed on certain fishing and boating equipment fuels. Funding for these programs is accomplished through continual indefinite appropriations from Congress.

The success of the WSFR program lies in partnerships between users (anglers, boaters, hunters and shooters), the industries that support those activities, State fish and wildlife

agencies, nongovernmental conservation organizations, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This concept is often referred to as the "user pay/user benefit cycle of success." The cycle starts with the manufacturers and the excise taxes that are paid on certain hunting and fishing equipment items and also through fuels taxes. These funds are distributed by the Service in the form of grants and provide State-based revenues for the restoration, conservation, and management of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. States must provide a matching share of up to 25 percent. Usually the matching share comes from State hunting and fishing license revenues.

Through WSFR, fish and wildlife habitats have been conserved, managed and protected; new lands have been acquired and conserved; sport fish and wildlife species have been reintroduced; technical assistance has been provided to land managers and landowners; access has been secured for hunting, fishing, boating, trapping and wildlife observation; shooting ranges, boat ramps and fishing piers have been constructed; and education programs have been initiated to encourage safe, responsible hunting and boating. The States' sport fish and wildlife projects have benefitted the resources, have created more hunting, fishing and boating opportunities to users and to the general public, and have also substantially benefited nongame species.

I had the honor of co-chairing a special session on the WSFR program where we looked at ways to build on the legacy of this historic and highly successful program to keep it strong. We discussed the need to reach out to new audiences with the WSFR conservation story, including those people who are non-consumptive benefactors of all that this program does to ensure abundant populations of our invaluable wildlife resources.

WSFR helps the resource and it helps people, a win-win program for certain.

*Cindy*

## Fisheries News

### *Ask and You May Receive!*

Article by Wm. Russell Cain,  
Friends of Dale Hollow NFH

*“They’re hatching!” The word spread through the school like wild fire. From pre-kindergarten to the seventh grade, they came to look and to learn. This took place in Hermitage Spring Elementary School in Clay County, Tennessee. It was one of the “Trout in the Classroom” projects of the Friends group of the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. Students and teachers both were excited as the eggs turned to fry. The baby fish are growing, in the aquarium, under the students watchful eyes, until they are big enough to be returned to the hatchery for further development and release into trout waters. The fish return will happen as a part of a school field trip to the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery later in the school year. The new Superintendent of Schools was so pleased; he volunteered to build a stand for the aquarium and chiller:*



*Learning first hand about fabulous salt marsh food chains, see story on page 3, credit: USFWS.*



*Students view their fingerlings, credit: Paul Boyce.*

The Discovery School, a private elementary school, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, was the first school to receive the “Trout in the Class Room Project” from the Friends Group. About sixty fry were placed in an aquarium. Under teacher and student direction, the growth process was observed until the baby fish grew into fingerlings. The fingerlings were then released into the Stone River, under the guidance of the Tennessee

Wildlife Resource Agency. The school is planning a warm water raising over the summer, but is preparing for more trout again in the fall.

Friends of Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery have enjoyed a big success in these two school programs. They are presently looking for ways to expand this teaching program into other schools in the area. There have been other inquiries asking for the project. The Friends group provides the aquarium, the chiller, instruction at setup, and oversight of the project. The hatchery then provides the eggs or fry, which even is used for their specific project.

The group plans to tie its “Biologist-in-Training”, a fourth grade-learning program, to its “Trout in the Classroom Project” in the near future.

This is only one of the many projects of this newly formed Friends group. For more information visit <http://www.tennesseetailwatertrout.com/friends>.



## Refuge News

### *A Vision Becomes Reality*

Article by Shirley Knudsen,  
Friends of Crystal River, Board Treasurer

About five years ago, the Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (formerly Friends of Chassahowitzka) became aware of a parcel of undeveloped refuge property located within the larger Chassahowitzka Refuge. The Friends immediately saw an opportunity. Their vision was to develop an outdoor classroom to bring environmental education to the students of Citrus County Schools.

A new Friends' member, the Lastinger Family Foundation, saw the potential of the project and awarded the Friends a donation to bring the classroom to life. With the enthusiastic approval of the Chassahowitzka Refuge Management, the Southeast Region Management and with Friends' member, Ross Knudsen chairing the project, plans were developed and approved and construction began. Nature hiking trails were cut out of the wilderness, a two-level observation tower overlooking the salt marsh and a pavilion to house picnic tables and classroom space were built using local contractors.

In 2011, another cog in the wheel of progress came to life. The Board became aware of a grant titled "Nature of Learning" available from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation. With the vision of an outdoor classroom in sight, Shirley Knudsen, Friends Board Treasurer, took on the task of writing the approximately 20-page proposal for the \$10,000 Grant. The grant application was approved. The stars were beginning to align. The pilot project began to develop. The target group for the first field trip was to be the Homosassa Elementary School 4th and 5th grade classes. The principal at the school had been "on board" with the project from the beginning and now was part of the group to bring it to reality. Also pre-approval and enthusiasm were obtained from Citrus County School Superintendent, Ms. Sam Himmel.

Shirley became the grant administrator and organizer, but was not a teacher. So, miraculously appeared a retired Citrus County teacher, Bonnie Rybak, who took on the task of writing lesson plans to meet state standards (and writing and re-writing). What a perfect fit.



*Checking the mud for isopods, credit: USFWS.*

This was not going to be just another field trip. Lesson plans were developed to bring textbooks to life in a hands-on manner.

Once lesson plans were written, came the task of instructors. An appeal was sent to the membership and forth came a formidable group of nine instructors. Included were retired science, biology and elementary school teachers as well as refuge staff and interns. The stars were again aligning. A myriad of materials and supplies were gathered including microscopes, refractometers, magnifying glasses, clipboards, pencils, educational posters, etc. Lesson Plans and Activity Sheets for the students were copied and assembled and we were off.

The 5th grade classes were targeted to reinforce standardized science exam testing, but were developed to emphasize the unique environment of the salt marsh, its habitats and wildlife, with class stations located throughout the property and at the water's edge to sift through the mud for its inhabitants (favorite part for students).

The 4th grade classes were constructed differently with a nature walk on the trails, observing, touching and feeling, the special opportunities of an outdoor classroom. Also part of the 4th grade classes was the water's edge learning experience.

The project consisted of a pre-field trip visit to the school by the team to familiarize the students with the refuge system, the Friends' Group and the "things to know" about going on the trip. Also, a pre-test was given to the students to learn their current knowledge about the environment and refuge system. After the field trips, the team made a post-visit to the school to review the trips and give a post-test to the students. The post-test revealed at least a 20-25% increase in knowledge for all students. The grant was able to cover all costs of the project with no cost to the school system. A matching contribution of over 500 volunteer hours was also made.

Wonderful accolades were given to the team and Friends by all teachers and students. It was stated that they had just expected a field trip, not the level of environmental education they received. Our local newspaper published a wonderful article on the project showing its value and contribution to the community. We have been asked many times, "when are you going to do this again"? I think we have created a monster.

Best of all is the vision coming to life and the satisfaction of a contribution to the future of our wildlife and environment. A tribute to the team and the experience was a student's comment to Bonnie Rybak when asked if he would be coming back to the property and bringing his family. His reply was "I am going to ask my Dad to bring me here for my birthday". Bonnie's analysis was "we gave the students a new learning experience and we trumped a trip to Chucky Cheese".

Please visit the Friends of the Crystal River NWR's website [www.friendsofchazz.org](http://www.friendsofchazz.org) for more information and photos about the project.

# Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Site of Historic Canoe Expedition Launch

Article by Josette G. Kaufman, Arthur R. Marshall Foundation, Executive Director



*The Core paddler group is ready to begin their expedition, credit: Josette G. Kaufman.*

*On January 18, 2012, twelve experienced paddlers in six canoes left the Loxahatchee NWR on the third leg of an annual historic canoe expedition that started on the western ridge of Lake Okeechobee in 2010. Over the past three years, paddlers have traveled hundreds of miles, often portaging over highways and man-made canals bringing much needed visibility to the Everglades, our National Treasure.*

This year, the experienced paddlers ranged in age from 20-70 and included two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Interns, David Block and Marisa Martinez. Paddlers represented the fields of science, education, media and the arts traveled over 78 miles from the refuge in Boynton Beach Florida, following the water flow through Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties to their final campsite near the northern edge of Everglades National Park on the evening of January 24, 2012. One of the paddlers, Victor Suarez of the Broward County Environmental Protection and Growth Management Department, came to the launch armed with a sheaf of drawings done by his daughter and her classmates. Each representing their idea of the theme of the expedition "It's my Everglades". The traveling artwork soon took a proud place on the poles below the red safety flags on the canoes.

All three legs of the expedition included twice-daily interactive podcasts with students in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties reaching over 4,172 participants. The paddlers shared their stories, responded to questions from the students and overall provided them with the opportunity to learn firsthand about

remote parts of the Everglades, while gaining valuable lessons about the source of drinking water for one in three people in Florida, The Everglades.

On the final evening of the expedition, the paddlers were joined by Carlton Ward's Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition. Bear biologist Joe Guthrie, Conservationist Mallory Lykes Dimmit and photojournalist Ward, began their journey from Everglades National Park and are headed toward Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Georgia their final destination.

**The team is documenting the corridor through photography, video streams, radio reports and daily updates on social media networks. The joining of two expeditions, one going south and one going north, both with the goal of spreading the word about the importance of the Everglades and the importance of the connections between the natural places in Florida will long be remembered as history making for both expeditions.**

Paddler Ron Haines wrote a day-by-day personal account of the journey that can be read on his blog.

<http://ronhaines.wordpress.com/xtra-2/2012-river-of-grass-canoe-expedition/>

After dinner each evening, Jim Jackson of Radio Green Earth facilitated a dialogue between the paddlers that not only assisted them as they prepared for the podcasts the following day, but recorded an oral history of the expedition.

The annual canoe expeditions are hosted by the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation with the primary purpose of educating students and their families about the importance of the Everglades. Plans are already underway for the fourth leg of a historic canoe expedition in 2013, which will take the paddlers to Florida Bay.



# Special Events offered at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Article by Gracie Gooch, Okefenokee NWR

*The Okefenokee Wildlife League, Inc. (OWL) is the Friends group of Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Throughout the year they help plan and execute seven special events. In the past six months, these events have been the Banks Lake Youth Fishing Derby, National Public Lands Day, Okefenokee Festival, Cane Grinding and Syrup Boil, and Christmas on Chesser Island.*

OWL helps fund each event through profits made in the bookstore while members volunteer their time and expertise in every way imaginable. For each event, there are anywhere from ten to seventy-five volunteers helping with everything from coordinating the programs and organizing the volunteers to manning booths and leading environmental education and interpretive programs. Each of these events turns out between 100 and 1000 visitors.

Last June held the *Banks Lake Youth Fishing Derby* which is hosted by Okefenokee at the satellite of Banks Lake NWR. Children ages 3-15 participate in the derby and casting competition. The winners receive trophies and every participant has the chance to win raffled prizes all of which are provided by OWL.

For their *National Public Lands Day* celebration in September, OWL provided lunch for all of the wonderful volunteers who came out to help clean up the Chesser Island Homestead.

October brought the *Okefenokee Festival* which included; amongst others; demonstrations, live animals, and games intended to show how people once lived in Southeast Georgia. Many of the booths that were set up during the *Okefenokee Festival* were manned by OWL members.



Volunteer Don Berryhill sharing information on Okefenokee Wildlife at the Okefenokee Festival, credit: USFWS/Art Webster.

The Friends group also provided the chance for visitors to try traditional food cooked on a wood burning stove by purchasing the supplies needed and providing the volunteers.

November was sugar cane time. The cane for the *Cane Grinding and Syrup Boil* was donated, cut, and ground by OWL members and volunteers. During the grinding and boiling at the refuge, visitors listened to live music while munching on homemade biscuits, both of which were provided by the League and its members.

December incorporated the holiday season and with it, *Christmas on Chesser Island*. The homemade cookies, cider and hot chocolate were all made by OWL members who volunteered their time and money to make the event a success. Some of the members lead carols by the fire while others entertained the children with decorating cookies. All the volunteers were a great help in setting up luminaries to mark the trails.

The Okefenokee Wildlife League has been a great help to the refuge. Without their donations and volunteers, none of the events would be as successful as they are now. Okefenokee NWR owes so much to the wonderful members and especially the board members who help keep the Friends group running strong.

## Calendar of Events

### May 25 - Everyday Grants

Every Day Grants provide funding to strengthen the effectiveness of public lands Friends groups. These grants help fund capacity building projects such as staff and board training, fundraising, and technology and website development. This year, The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) is supporting two cycles of Every Day Grants. Each cycle supports **25 organizations with grants of up to \$5,000 each**. The deadline to submit a pre-proposal is **May 25, 2012**.

### June 7 - Butterfly Walk-about at Harris Neck NWR

Coastal WildScapes is sponsoring a butterfly walk-about on June 7th at Harris Neck NWR. Harris Neck Refuge Manager Kimberley Hayes will lead this informative exploration of butterflies and their host plants.

### June 9 - Get Outdoors Day

A new annual event to encourage healthy, active outdoor fun. Entrance fees to Service lands will be waived.

### July 3 - Full Moon Guided Canoe Trips

Enjoy a guided moonlight canoe tour through a portion of the interior of ARM Loxahatchee NWR.

## Conserving the Future

WILDLIFE REFUGES & THE NEXT GENERATION

### Check It Out

#### Conserving the Future: New Resources for Friends Partnerships

Wondering how to engage in meaningful discussions and work with the Service to implement *Conserving the Future*, the 15-year vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System? Check out the new "Friends Fact Sheet", posted to the resources page on [AmericasWildlife.org](http://AmericasWildlife.org). This page has other tools as well, such as a PowerPoint presentation and an Executive Summary of the vision.

## Trash Can Corrals

Article by Nancy Chatelaine, FAVOR  
Friends and Volunteers of Refuge  
Florida Keys

*FAVOR's Our Animal Family, and USFWS's National Key Deer Refuge sponsored a "Say No to Nibblers" free trash can corral giveaway at the Blue Hole parking area on Big Pine Key on Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup>.*

The group constructed 40 corrals made of pressure treated lumber and gave them away free to residents of Big Pine and No Name Key. They focused on these islands first because of their larger Key deer populations, and the abundance of other urban wildlife species that have become accustomed to breaking into unsecured trashcans for an easy meal. This can lead to these creatures ingesting materials that make them sick, or in some instances, even kill them. One of *Our Animal Family's* main themes is helping to Keep Wildlife Wild, and, by outreaching to their local community, they helped educate their neighbors on the importance of securing our trash. This creates a win-win situation for the wildlife and the local community members, who are often left to pick up the trash that is littered around our neighborhoods.

FAVOR and Key Deer Refuge volunteers and staff want to thank all their volunteers and local residents who contributed their time on Saturday morning to help make this event happen. A special shout out to several of their volunteers whose devotion really made this event happen, Dennis Fowler, Karl Paoletti, Glenn Cooper, Bill Bivona, Jim Bell, and Maya Totman. They also send out a special thanks to Big Pine and No Name Key residents Jack Clark, Anne Press, Eugene Hartman, and Randy Hochberg for giving up their Saturday to help build these awesome corrals. Refuge construction helpers included Anne Morkill, Dana Cohen, and Kristie Killam. They also appreciate and want to send a special thanks to Overseas Lumber, on Big Pine Key for supplying them with materials at greatly reduced rates.



Event volunteers proudly display a finished corral, credit: USFWS.

## Tip of the Quarter

### NEW Facebook Group Page for Service Friends

The National Wildlife Refuge System has created a NEW Facebook group discussion page for Friends and you are welcome to join the group!

### What is the purpose of the 'Friends of National Wildlife Refuges' Facebook discussion group page?

The purpose of this private Facebook group discussion page is to provide a Friends-driven venue for board member communications across state and regional borders and Service programs. The discussion is intended to be largely Friends-driven and focused on a variety of discussion topics that support increasing the effectiveness of Friends organizations and their partnerships with the Service.

### What this page is NOT intended for?

This discussion page is not intended for the general membership of Friends organizations nor as a public outreach site in which to promote events, political advocacy, and personal agendas. Only members of this group can post and see posts on this group page.

### Who should join this discussion group?

All Service Friends board members are encouraged to join. Service staff that

work with Friends organizations may also join this group — but first and foremost, the discussion group is intended to be largely Friends-driven. The Refuge System's National Friends Coordinator will have regularly scheduled postings to facilitate engagement in the site. Please feel free to engage in and contribute to the conversations, but let's try not to dominate the discussions.

### Who administers this group page?

This group page is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System headquarters. We pledge to monitor the group page, help facilitate the discussion, and not share personal information for use in other venues or communications.

Group page contact:

Joanna Webb  
National Friends Coordinator  
[joanna\\_webb@fws.gov](mailto:joanna_webb@fws.gov)  
703/358 2392

### How do I join?

You must have your own personal Facebook page before you can join. If you already have a Facebook page, you can join this group immediately by clicking on this link - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofwildliferefuges>